

Don't bet on media bias

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2007-1-30

I am delighted that Manchester has just won the bid for Britain's first [super casino](#). I have never gambled – indeed, I must be one of the few tourists to spend two nights in Las Vegas without waging a cent. But I do enjoy it when conventional media wisdom is confounded. Last night's BBC News (along iwth most of the news media) was confidently telling me that Blackpool and Greenwich were the frontrunners to get a super-casino. So I am pleased that the city that gave us the unpredictability of Manchester City Football Club will now host the biggest collection of roulette wheels and Blackjack tables this side of Monte Carlo.

Again, the conventional media response is to decry how this government is letting loose the demons of addiction and debt. Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell is portrayed as an evil temptress enticing hard-working citizens into a mega clip-joint, a vast den of iniquity that will see them spend their children's savings on pontoon. Well, yes, I do find gambling sleezy and pointless. But then I find a lot of modern society superficial and crap. I am something of a humourless old git. But I also fell in love with Las Vegas, even without gambling myself. The act of artificial self-gratification on a massive and lurid scale is strangely compelling.

And anyway, people are going to gamble more because they have more money. All other risk is being sucked out of their health and safety concious lives. And online gambling has opened it up to new groups like women. If the super-casino makes Manchester a little more like Nevada, then I for one will rejoice, and I bet most Mancunians will, too.

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